

The Blue Baby

Understanding Cyanotic Congenital Heart Defects

A “blue baby” refers to an infant whose lips, tongue, skin, or nail beds look bluish because the blood oxygen level is too low. In heart disease, this can happen when a congenital heart defect allows **oxygen-poor blood** to circulate to the body.



COMMON CYANOTIC HEART DEFECTS

These are some of the congenital heart defects that can cause low oxygen levels.



Tetralogy of Fallot



Transposition of the Great Arteries



Truncus Arteriosus



Tricuspid Atresia



Pulmonary Atresia



Total Anomalous Pulmonary Venous Return (TAPVR)



Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome (HLHS)



WARNING SIGNS



Blue lips, tongue, or skin



Fast breathing or shortness of breath



Poor feeding or tiring easily during feeds



Sweating with feeds



Poor weight gain



Unusual sleepiness or lethargy



Fainting or passing out



Oxygen saturation below normal



DIAGNOSIS

Early detection is key to better outcomes.



Pulse oximetry screening (newborn screening)



Physical examination



Echocardiogram (Heart Ultrasound)



ECG (Electrocardiogram)



Chest X-Ray



Cardiac catheterization (if needed)



Newborn screening helps detect critical congenital heart disease before discharge.



TREATMENT

Treatment depends on the defect and severity.



Oxygen therapy



Prostaglandin medication to keep the ductus arteriosus open



Cardiac catheterization



Surgery or staged repairs to correct the defect



Long-term follow-up and care by a pediatric cardiology team



Many children need more than one procedure as they grow.



SEEK URGENT CARE IMMEDIATELY IF:



The baby becomes very blue



Has trouble breathing



Feeds poorly



Becomes limp or unusually sleepy



Has low oxygen readings



Most children with congenital heart disease now survive into adulthood with modern diagnosis, surgery, and long-term follow-up.

Every little heart deserves a healthy tomorrow.



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